



25 August 2010

Administrative instruction

Upgrading of substantive and technical skills

Pursuant to section 4.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2009/4, the Under-Secretary-General for Management promulgates the following procedures to implement the programme for upgrading the substantive and technical skills of staff members.

Section 1

Objectives and contents of the programme

1.1 The purpose of the programme for upgrading substantive and technical skills is to provide departments and offices throughout the Secretariat with a means to ensure that they can carry out their substantive work and adjust to new mandates and responsibilities by maintaining and developing the skills of their staff within the allocated resources. The programme provides staff with opportunities for professional growth and development and, as stipulated in section 2.1 of ST/SGB/2009/9, learning and development is a responsibility shared by the Organization, its managers and each individual staff member.

1.2 Staff development activities that may take place under this programme include specialized training, research, seminars, refresher courses, e-learning, professional conferences, workshops and any other activities mentioned in section 2.6 of ST/SGB/2009/9. Where the skills and knowledge required can best be acquired through hands-on experience, on-the-job training assignments may also be included. Activities may be carried out in-house or externally, under the conditions set out in section 3 below. While the Organization does not fund degree programmes, support for a course which is part of a degree programme may be offered from this allocation at the discretion of the head of department or office, provided that all other conditions have been met.

Section 2

Delegation of authority

2.1 Responsibility for managing the resources allocated to each department or office under the provisions of the present instruction is hereby delegated to the heads of departments and offices concerned.



Section 3

Annual training plans

Preparation

3.1 Each department or office shall determine its training needs and set priorities for achieving its strategic goals and developing its human resources. Individual training requirements shall be identified during work-planning and performance management discussions in the context of the performance appraisal system or in individual discussions of training requirements with supervisors, which staff members are encouraged to initiate. On that basis, the department or office shall prepare an annual training plan that aims to provide training opportunities for all categories of staff and to achieve a gender balance. When developing the plan, departments and offices may wish to consider other appropriate opportunities for external study offered by the Organization (e.g. sabbatical leave). Departments and offices may wish to consult the Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section of the Office of Human Resources Management or the training service at duty stations away from Headquarters on the formulation of the plan. The plan shall be prepared in consultation with staff as provided for by Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/274.

Submission, review and approval

3.2 Departments and offices shall submit their annual training plans at the end of each calendar year to the Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section for review and approval. All plans shall be reviewed to determine whether they are consistent with the objectives and contents of the programme set out in section 1 above, and with the guidelines for preparing the plans specified in subsection 3.1 above. When the various plans reveal common needs, centrally coordinated training programmes may be proposed for the consideration of the Office of Human Resources Management to maximize use of resources. Centrally coordinated programmes are offered in the areas of leadership, resource management and administration, career support, information technology and language and communications skills. These include the e-learning opportunities offered through the eLearning Portal of the Secretariat. Proposals for external training shall be approved in cases where no equivalent training is available within the Secretariat or other agencies of the United Nations common system of salaries, allowances and benefits to which Secretariat staff have access, or where it would not be cost-effective to organize in-house training.

Section 4

Funding and administration of the annual training plan

4.1 After review and approval of the training plans, the Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section shall allocate funds to each department and office at the beginning of each calendar year. The criteria applied in allocating resources include, but are not limited to, an equitable distribution of available resources among all departments and offices, their effectiveness in carrying out the previous year's plan, the Organization's strategic priorities for the coming year and the number of regular budget posts in the department or office. Allocated funds may be used for payment of consultants to deliver in-house training courses to increase cost-effectiveness, and for tuition fees, travel expenses, per diem or academic

stipends, as applicable, in the case of individual external training. Effort should be made to reduce travel expenses to a minimum by combining travel with other official business.

4.2 Each department or office shall be responsible for the execution of its training plan. It shall inform its staff of the approved plan and shall be responsible for the administration of the use of the funds allocated, including the approval of individual training requests, which shall be considered in accordance with section 6 below.

4.3 Offices and departments may need to identify extrabudgetary resources to supplement the allocation, as necessary. Provision for training of peacekeeping operations staff is made under each mission's assessed budget.

4.4 If necessary, the department or office may adjust the plan as originally approved, provided the adjustments are within the limits of allocated funds and are described in the required quarterly report, as provided for in section 5 below.

Section 5

Monitoring and evaluation of the execution of the annual training plan

5.1 The Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section shall monitor the manner in which each annual training plan is executed. For that purpose, each department or office shall submit, at the end of each quarter, an expenditure report on the use of the allocated funds and an updated training plan describing the training undertaken by its staff during the year, together with an assessment of the impact of the training on the work of the department or office and of the individuals involved. The two reports may be consolidated into one presented in a template to be provided by the Office of Human Resources Management.

5.2 The reports shall be reviewed and evaluated by the Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section. Effectiveness in carrying out the approved annual training plan and making optimal use of the allocated funds shall be a major factor in determining the allocation of funds for this programme in subsequent years.

Section 6

Conditions for participation of staff members in the programme

Eligibility

6.1 Staff members at all levels holding a United Nations letter of appointment under the Staff Rules are eligible to participate in the programme. To be granted financial assistance for external training, notwithstanding staff rules 4.12 (c) and 4.13 (c), there should be an expectation of continued service for at least one year in the Secretariat after completion of the proposed training activity.

Individual requests for training

6.2 Individual requests for training shall be submitted, through the immediate supervisor, to the relevant department or office responsible for approval of such requests. Requests consistent with the annual training plan may be approved within the limits of available resources. In the case of requests both for individuals to pursue training outside the Organization and for groups of staff to be trained in-house under

this programme, the department or office shall take into account the following factors in deciding whether the request should be approved:

- (a) The relationship of the studies to the functions of the staff member and/or organizational needs;
- (b) The suitability of the staff member for the proposed studies;
- (c) The quality of the programme and the sponsoring institution;
- (d) The expected impact of the proposed training on the staff member's professional development and the work of the office or department;
- (e) The possibility that the training will have a multiplier effect (that is, for the beneficiary of the training to impart the knowledge gained to other staff members).

Leave arrangements

6.3 Staff members participating in training activities outside their office may be placed on special leave with or without pay, in accordance with staff rule 5.3 (a) (i). They may also use accrued annual leave for all or part of the period of study. The head of department at Headquarters or the chief of administration at offices away from Headquarters may approve special leave with pay for the purposes of the programme for a period of up to 20 working days or a longer period, in accordance with the applicable delegation of authority. Requests for special leave with pay in excess of the period that may be approved at the department or office level shall be submitted to the Learning, Development and Human Resources Services Division of the Office of Human Resources Management.

6.4 In accordance with ST/SGB/2003/4 on flexible working arrangements, staff members wishing to attend courses relevant to their professional development at universities or other learning institutions may request breaks of up to three hours per day for a maximum of two days per week. The hours spent away from work during a particular week must be made up during that week.

Section 7

Final provisions

7.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

7.2 Administrative instruction ST/AI/1997/4 on upgrading of substantive and technical skills is hereby superseded and abolished.

(Signed) Angela Kane
Under-Secretary-General for Management